

**SPECIFICATION**

**TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:**

5           Be it known that CLARENCE THIBEAU, a citizen of Canada, resident  
of Chester Basin, State of Nova Scotia, Country of Canada, have invented a  
new and useful improvement in a

**AIR GAP SPACER FOR USE IN BUILDING CONSTRUCTION**

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which invention is fully set forth in the following specification.

## **AIR GAP SPACER FOR USE IN BUILDING CONSTRUCTION**

### **CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION**

5           This application claims priority to Canadian Patent Application No. 2,414,055 filed on December 12, 2002 and to Canadian Patent Application No. (not yet designated) filed on November 18, 2003 both entitled Air Gap Spacer for use in Building Construction, both having Clarence Thibeau as  
10   inventor.

### **BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

          The present invention relates to an air gap spacer which is designed to be attached to an exterior surface of a building during construction, and;  
15   more specifically, as an air gap spacer to be applied between an exterior surface of a building and the cladding or other exterior material being placed on the outer surface of the building, in order to provide a sufficient air space and facilitate improved water drainage and ventilation while allowing a firm backing to which exterior siding, shingles or brick may be attached.

20           In the construction industry, National Building Code requirements normally stipulate that a minimum air gap be provided between the exterior sheathing of a building being constructed and the exterior siding or brick being placed thereon. As an example, the National Building Code of Canada requires that the minimum air gap be 3/8 " or 10mm. This is because climate  
25   changes could result in the external siding, shingles or brick expanding or contracting in response to variations in temperature, which may compromise the exterior surface of the building. Siding manufacturers also generally specify that a minimum air gap be provided to ensure their product does not warp or buckle in ever changing conditions of temperature and humidity.

30           In the past, construction of an air space of this type was usually achieved using wood (1" x 3" or milled strips) pieces which would be

attached to the wall at required spacing intervals. Utilizing such a method would create an air gap when installed horizontally, but this limits air circulation and water drainage. Further, the wooden strips can eventually rot, causing structural damage and risk of insect infestation.

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#### DESCRIPTION OF THE PRIOR ART

There are numerous examples of prior art devices designed for use in the construction industry when it is necessary to achieve support and uniform spacing between adjacent lengths of materials, such as when  
10 applying siding or clapboard to the side of a house, or shingles to the roof of a house.

U.S. Patent No. 4,936,021 describes an adjustable support/spacer device for facilitating desired spacing between two adjacent surface members, such as siding and the exterior surface of a building under  
15 construction. The device described therein is self-clamping to the material, such as shingles or siding, being applied to the exterior surface of the building under construction. However, utilization of such a device is time-consuming, because to achieve the desired spacing necessitates continual manual adjustment of the device, and does not adequately provide for a  
20 spacer device which efficiently provides for improved ventilation and drainage characteristics.

Other types of prior art devices describe installing siding panels onto a support structure. U.S. Patent No. 3,236,932 describes elongated metal strips which are used for applying metallic siding panels to a building  
25 structure without the use of nails or other fasteners penetrating the siding panels. Thus, no holes are formed into the siding panels. Each of the elongated metal strips has a central box portion with side flanges containing holes. The metal strips are fastened with nails or screws along the flanges to the support wall. The strips also have vertically spaced clips for engaging  
30 the upper and lower edges of the siding panels.

Another example of this type of prior art device is described in U.S. Patent No. 4,047,349, which teaches a sheet material attaching device for securing siding panels to a building. The attaching device is a longitudinal strip constructed from bendable sheet metal or plastic with support tabs which are integrally stamped-out segments of the strip. Preformed slots in the siding panel are engaged with the bendable support tabs which are then bent to secure the siding panel to the sheet material attaching device. However these types of devices do not provide for an air gap spacer meant to provide spacing between the exterior surface of a building under construction, and the materials being placed on the outer surface of the building, in order to provide an air space and facilitate water drainage to the internal air gap, while allowing a firm backing to which exterior siding, shingles or brick may be attached.

Accordingly, there is a need in the construction industry to provide a durable air gap spacer which requires less installation time to install and which facilitates improved air circulation and water drainage capabilities. The present invention satisfies this need and provides these benefits.

#### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

An object of the present invention is to provide an air gap spacer having improved ventilation and drainage characteristics, as well as increased durability, and which is easily installed.

Another object of the present invention is to provide an air gap spacer which can provide a firmer and more even backing over a wider area than conventional construction methods, with respect to the exterior shingles, siding or brick being applied thereon, over the exterior of the building.

According to an aspect of the present invention, an air gap spacer comprises a sheet material of substantially uniform thickness comprising a framework of interconnecting spacer members advantageously configured in a lattice-like pattern and having apertures therebetween, the sheet material being adapted for placement between a building construction

sheathing material and an exterior cladding layer so as to provide an air gap therebetween, wherein the spacer members include internally formed passages or openings therein, so as to permit air circulation and water drainage from between the sheathing material and the exterior cladding layer.

In another aspect of the present invention an air gap spacer comprises a sheet material of substantially uniform thickness comprising a framework of interconnecting spacer members, the sheet material being adapted for placement between a building construction sheathing material and an exterior cladding layer so as to provide an air gap therebetween, wherein the spacer members include ventilation and drainage means formed therein, so as to permit air circulation and water drainage from between the sheathing material and the exterior cladding layer.

The air gap spacer of the present invention is advantageously formed with ventilation and drainage apertures or internal passages or openings therein so as to facilitate improved air circulation and water drainage. The ventilation and drainage apertures can, for example, be in the form of a depression or groove which is formed on an underside of the air gap spacer, particularly at the intersection of a pair of spacer members. If, for example, moisture or condensation water accumulates between the construction sheathing material and the exterior cladding layer, the apertures or internally formed passages or openings of the air gap spacer of the present invention permit the moisture or rain water to run along the air gap spacer, and away from the construction sheathing material, e.g. plywood or chipboard, and the exterior cladding layer, which may be e.g. aluminum or vinyl siding, shingles, brick, stone or stucco. The apertures or internally formed passages or openings then allow for water to pool thereon and drain within and out from below the air gap barrier formed therebetween.

The internally formed passages of the air gap spacer will normally comprise vertically oriented passages, but it is conceivable that the internally formed passages can also be formed in a diagonal orientation, or that some

passages may be formed in a horizontal, or somewhat horizontal, orientation.

Preferably, the air gap spacer of the present invention is manufactured as 4' x 8' sheets of a corrugated recyclable plastic material, such as Coroplast TM , and is preferably 3/8" (10mm) thick, though it is possible to have different thicknesses of, for instance, from 10mm-20mm, and is designed to be attached to the cladding on an exterior wall of a building during construction. As it is preferably made of plastic, the product will not rot and saves on lumber. The manufacturing of the air gap spacer in 4' x 8' sheets also means less installation time is required to install and provide such an air gap, as compared to conventional construction methods, and facilitates improved air circulation and water drainage capabilities. The air gap spacer is normally to be installed in a vertically oriented manner, but it is conceivable that it can also be applied in a somewhat horizontal orientation.

If needed, a utility knife can quickly cut the air spacer sheet to size to fill smaller areas, as required, and to allow for window and door openings, eliminating "boxing in" the opening.

Preferably, the design of the air gap spacer in 4' x 8' sheets is in the form of a diamond pattern, effectively creating a lattice-like structure. Normally, utilizing such a diamond pattern configuration for the air gap spacer normally results in each 'diamond' in the sheet of plastic material having 4" x 6" dimensions. Since the minimum surface of shingles exposed to the elements is 4", this design provides a firmer and more even backing over a wider area than conventional construction methods, with respect to the exterior shingles, siding or brick being applied thereon, over the exterior of the building. However, it is conceivable that each 'diamond' in each diamond pattern within the sheet of plastic material may have 4" x 8" dimensions, though in such an embodiment, it may be preferable to have an additional bridging portion stretching from side to side across the center of each individual diamond pattern, so as to provide additional stability and

strength to the air gap spacer. It is also conceivable that the interconnected spacer elements can be manufactured in square, hexagonal and rectangular configurations, rather than strictly a diamond pattern. It is further conceivable that the air gap spacer of the present invention could be collapsible for storage purposes, wherein the framework of interconnecting spacer members comprising the air gap spacer can be folded upon itself.

The 4" x 6", or 4" x 8", dimensions for the diamond pattern result in 4 "diamonds" with a total horizontal width of 16", thereby facilitating nailing or screwing to the underlying studs of a sheathed wall. Similarly, two 8" wide "diamonds" also result in a 16" width.

The air gap spacer can be secured to the exterior wall of the building being constructed, and the siding, shingles or brick positioned on the exterior surface of the building by way of securing means such as nails, screws or the like. As the spacer is made of plastic material, the securing means can be driven straight through the spacer to secure the spacer to the adjacent material, or, in an embodiment of the present invention, the air gap spacer can be formed having a plurality of mounting holes therein, so as to facilitate the securing means being placed therethrough.

Prior to siding, brick or shingle installation, a strip of insect screen, eg: 12 " wide, is advantageously attached to the bottom of the sheathing, and then lapped over the bottom of the air gap spacer, so as to restrict bugs and insects from entering and nesting within the air barrier located between the exterior wall of the building being constructed, and the siding, shingles or brick to be positioned later on the exterior surface of the building. Alternatively, the bottom of the air gap spacer can be manufactured with a strip of screen attached thereto.

As described above, the present invention provides for an easily and rapidly installed air gap spacer that provides for improved ventilation and drainage characteristics, and that can provide a more firm and even backing over a wider area than conventional construction techniques, with respect to

the exterior shingles, siding or brick being applied thereon, over the exterior of the building.

According to another aspect of the present invention there is provided an air gap spacer for providing spacing between an outer wall surface of a building under construction and an exterior cladding material, the air gap spacer comprising: an apertured planar surface for attachment to a surface of the exterior cladding material to maintain the cladding material in spaced relationship to the outer wall surface; and a plurality of mutually spaced protrusions of substantially uniform height depending from one side of the apertured surface, the apices of at least some of the protrusions forming a protrusion plane, the protrusion plane being capable of attachment to the outer wall surface of the building; whereby, when the spacer is in place, liquid and air may pass through channels formed among the protrusions to facilitate air circulation and liquid drainage.

The protrusions advantageously depend from the apertured planar surface at least approximately perpendicularly and may be disposed equidistantly over the planar surface of grouped or in concentrated areas thereof. The protrusions may be all alike, terminating to form the protrusion plane. The protrusion plane is preferably at least substantially parallel to the apertured plane. The apertured surface may comprise aperture surface areas and matter surface area of similar magnitudes and the apertured surface may comprise greater aperture surface areas than matter surface areas. The apertures of the apertured surface may be of a repeating pattern over parts of or at least substantially the entire spacer. The protrusions may be of a repeating pattern over parts of or at least substantially the entire surface of the spacer. The apertures may be of at least the following shapes: diamond, circular, square, rectangular, oval and quadrilateral. The protrusions may be of at least the following shapes: pyramidal, flat topped pyramidal, conical, flat topped conical, rectangular based pyramid, cuboid and rectangular block. The spacer may be made by at least one of: injection moulding, pouring moulding, extrusion or stamping.

According to another aspect of the present invention there is provided an air gap spacer comprising: an apertured sheet material of at least substantially uniform thickness, the sheet material being adapted for placement between an outer wall surface of a building under construction and an exterior cladding material so as to provide an air gap therebetween, wherein the spacer material includes passages therein, so as to permit air circulation and liquid drainage among the apertures. The sheet material may be of a lattice structure forming diamond shaped apertures, the passages running through the lattice structure. The passages may be disposed at intersections formed by the spacer material. The air gap spacer may be adapted to be secured to the surface of the building being constructed by way of securing means selected from the group consisting of tacks, nails and screws. The air gap spacer may comprise a plurality of mounting holes therein, whereby securing means may be placed therethrough for attaching the spacer to the surface of the building being constructed.

The exterior cladding material may be one of: siding, shingles, brick and clapboard or another suitable material. The spacer may be made of a material selected from the group consisting of plastic, metal, aluminum, and pressed wood particle product or other suitable material.

#### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Embodiments of the present invention will be further described with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of an uncut 4' x 8' sheet of the air gap spacer provided in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a side elevational view of an air gap spacer according to an embodiment of the present invention, which illustrates drainage holes formed on a surface of the air gap spacer;

FIG. 3 is a top elevational view of the air gap spacer illustrated in FIG. 2, which illustrates an air gap spacer system according to another embodiment of the present invention, wherein the air gap spacer is provided with nail mounting holes, whereby the air gap spacer can be attached to an adjacent material; and

FIG. 4 is a side elevational view of an air gap spacer according to another embodiment of the present invention, wherein the air gap spacer provides for a plurality of drainage and ventilation openings which are formed therein.

FIGS. 5 a,b,c are depictions of the shape of one surface of the air gap spacer according to certain embodiments of the present invention.

FIGS. 6 a,b,c are depictions of the shape of the protrusions of the air gap spacer according to certain embodiments of the present invention.

FIG. 7 is a perspective view of an example of an embodiment according to the present invention.

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Illustrated in FIG. 1 is a large uncut 4' x 8' sheet of the air gap spacer 1 of the present invention. In this embodiment, the uncut sheet utilizes a diamond pattern configuration 2.

Figure 2 illustrates one embodiment of the present invention, whereby the air gap spacer of the present invention is formed with an indentation 3 on an underside thereon, so as to facilitate water drainage away from the exterior wall of the building and the siding, shingles or brick positioned on the exterior surface of the building, and to facilitate improved air circulation. The air gap spacer is formed of a corrugated plastic material 4, and the diamond pattern of the uncut sheet results in open areas 5 being formed within the uncut sheet. The open areas 5 within the uncut sheet reduces the total weight of the air gap spacer 1, making the air gap spacer easier to secure to adjacent surfaces, and permits improved water drainage and air circulation.

Referring to Figure 3, this figure illustrates the embodiment of the present invention introduced in Figure 2, wherein the air gap spacer is provided with nail mounting holes 7, whereby the air gap spacer can be secured to the exterior of a building.

5 Referring to Figure 4, there is illustrated another embodiment of the present invention, whereby the air gap spacer is formed of a corrugated plastic material having a first surface 9 which overlies, and is spaced in parallel relationship to, a second surface 11. Spacer elements 13 are positioned along the length of the air gap spacer, these being positioned at spaced intervals between the first 9 and second surfaces 11, whereby the  
10 spacer elements 13 are perpendicularly positioned in relation to the first 9 and second 11 surfaces. The spacer elements 13 create a plurality of openings 15 within the air gap spacer of the present invention, to provide for drainage and ventilation.

15 Figures 5a, b and c, 6a, b and c and 7 illustrate certain embodiments of the present invention. The air gap spacers shown are partial planes, as seen in Figures 5a, b and c. Protrusions extend from the planar surface, as seen in Figures 6a, b and c. In this way, the amount of material used can be reduced and adequate air and liquid flow is achieved. In operation, the  
20 profiled surface is affixed to a building wall by tacking, adhesive or the like leaving the apertured planar surface for application of the siding, shingles, brick or the like.

In Figures 5a, b and c the material is indicated with reference numeral 16 and the spaces in between by reference numeral 17. Although  
25 diamond, circle and square shapes are illustrated, many shapes could be used. In Figures 6a, b and c, the protrusions (18) are indicated with reference numeral 18. Although tapered square, conical and elongated triangular shapes are illustrated, many other shapes could be used. In Figure 7, a perspective view of the protrusions (18) is illustrated. Sample  
30 dimensions are as follows: thickness of spacer 12mm (height of the protrusions 11mm), width of the base of a protrusion 5mm, width of the apex

of a protrusion 2mm, distance between two adjacent protrusions at their base 5mm. Dimensions should be determined to achieve acceptable physical properties. Manufacturing methods may include pouring, extrusion or injection molding and stamping.

- 5           The spacers may be of various sizes, for instance (in feet) 4x8, 4x4, 4x2, 2x2. The flat surface holes may be of various sizes, for instance (in inches) 6, 4, 2. The protrusions are preferably not less than 10mm apart. The thickness of the spacer is preferably at least 10mm.

- 10           The foregoing are exemplary embodiments of the present invention and a person skilled in the art would appreciate that modifications to these embodiments may be made without departing from the scope and spirit of the invention.